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SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

REVISING THE NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM

by

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March 2008

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REVISING THE NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The National Exercise Program serves as the primary means for training national leaders and department and agency staff members. Additionally, it serves in promoting collaboration among stakeholders and partners at all levels of government with homeland security missions. Although the National Strategy for Homeland Security directs a National Exercise Program and DHS codifies this program in doctrine, it is continually a work in progress. This paper identifies and discusses four key areas which must be addressed in order to improve the National Exercise Program. These four key areas are Interagency Participation, Stability and Predictability, Funding, and Corrective Actions. These four areas are inter-related in that actions occurring in one area can have an impact in any one of the other three areas. Although DHS has established a framework for administering the NEP, many challenges remain before the NEP is fully integrated and institutionalized.

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I. REVISING NATIONAL-LEVEL EXERCISES

A. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Exercise Program (NEP), as specified in the original National Strategy for Homeland Security published in 2002.^{1,2} NEP serves as the primary means for training national leaders and department and agency staff members. Additionally, it serves in promoting collaboration among stakeholders and partners at all levels of government with homeland security missions. National-level exercises provide the vehicle for conducting large-scale events testing collective preparedness, improving interoperability, and building strong teams across all levels of government and the private sector.³ DHS manages national-level exercises at the federal-level in order to effectively and efficiently administer the limited resources and funding available for such efforts. These exercises generally involve department and agency leaders and staffs, plus entities of two or more federal agencies, and interaction with multiple regions and states.⁴

¹ National Strategy for Homeland Security (Washington D.C.: 2002), 45.

² The 2002 Version of the National Strategy for Homeland Security was replaced in October 2007.

³ Department of Homeland Security, National Exercise Program Implementation Plan (Washington D.C.: 2007), 6 (accessed June 15, 2007).

⁴ Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, Volume 1: HSEEP Overview and Exercise Program Management (Washington D.C.: February 2007), 12, [https://hseep.dhs.gov/support/HSEEP%20Volume%20I%2021507%20\(Final%20Revision%20February%202007\).pdf](https://hseep.dhs.gov/support/HSEEP%20Volume%20I%2021507%20(Final%20Revision%20February%202007).pdf) (accessed October 6, 2007).

Planning requirements, participants, and complexity of scenarios have evolved since the first national-level exercise in 2000.⁵ Part of this evolution is due to the maturing of DHS and its National Exercise Program along with the formalization of policies, procedures and operations necessary to conduct civil support and homeland security and defense missions. Another important reason for this evolution is a result of the problems faced by local, state and federal responders and agencies in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the impetus to institute almost immediate fixes for the problems incurred from that response. For these reasons, this paper identifies the following four areas that our National leaders must revise in order to improve the training and preparedness of national partners and agencies in national-level exercises⁶:

- Interagency participation
- Stability and predictability
- Funding
- Corrective action process

These items are not isolated from one another. For the most part, all four areas are inter-related and the effects of one area can influence one or more of the other three areas. For example, funding shortfalls usually affect the other three areas.

⁵ This Exercise was the first Top Official (TOPOFF) exercise conducted in May 2000. Hereinafter, this exercise will be referred to as TOPOFF 1.

⁶ These revisions are intended to supplement the Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question this thesis primarily addresses is how should National-level Exercises better prepare federal departments and agencies to respond to Incidents of National Significance⁷.

C. PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

Our Government must have a challenging and realistic exercise program in order to successfully fulfill Homeland Security requirements to prevent, detect, deter, and respond against terrorist attacks while simultaneously being fully prepared to respond to catastrophic natural disasters. National-level exercises test collective federal-level preparedness, improve interoperability, and build strong teams across all levels of government and the private sector. This document identifies four key areas requiring improvements intended to increase the effectiveness of national-level exercises for federal departments and agencies. These revisions require federal departments and agencies to train during exercises in order to prepare them to realistically respond to catastrophic events. The importance of addressing these items has a direct impact on preparedness of the federal department and agencies to respond to natural or man-made disaster events, when local and state responders are unable to do so.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Exercise Program is a new and developing program. Since the tragic events of 9/11, only a handful

⁷ The NRP defines Incidents of National Significance as follows: "An actual or potential high-impact event that requires a coordinated and effective response by and appropriate combination of Federal, State, local, tribal, nongovernmental, and/or private-sector entities in order to save lives and minimize damage, and provide the basis for long-term community recovery and mitigation activities."

of national-level exercises have taken place under the auspices of DHS and its national-level exercise and training program.⁸ Due to the recent development of these exercises and the low number of exercises conducted, there is not a plethora of information on this subject. Of the information that does exist, most is in the form of government directives, reports, or summaries. Some of these documents provide the policy and implementation for national-level exercises. Other documents are post-exercise reports that identify and document organizational strengths and weaknesses observed during the exercise(s). Still other documents include government and congressional oversight reports that influence either national-level exercises or preparedness efforts, or both. Using these other types of documents, although not derived from exercises, we can benchmark the progress of participants when conducting national-level exercises. Based on this literature search conducted, the literature has been broken down into three categories, as follows: (a) National-level Policies and Directives, (b) Post-exercise reports, summaries and reviews, and (c) Supplementary documents influencing national-level exercises.

1. National-Level Policies and Directives

Homeland Security Presidential Directive #8, dated December 17, 2003, serves as the primary policy for establishing national-level exercises. HSPD-8 assigns responsibility to DHS for developing and implementing a

⁸ These exercises are: TOPOFF 3 (April 2005), DP-04 (2004), AS-05 (April 2005 - combined with TOPOFF 3), AS-06 (May 2006), VS-07 (December 2006), AS-07 (May 2007) and TOPOFF IV/VS-08 (October 2007). These exercises were not designated as National-level exercises but had participation by 2 or more Federal Departments and/or participation by state agencies.

national-level training and exercise program.⁹ Specifically, HSPD-8 identifies three key actions DHS must accomplish in the area of Training and Exercises, as follows:

1. Establish a comprehensive training program.
2. Establish a "national program and a multi-year planning system to conduct homeland security preparedness-related exercises that reinforces identified training standards and provides for evaluation of readiness."¹⁰
3. Develop a process to collect, analyze, and disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and information from exercises, training events, research, and other sources, including actual incidents, and establish procedures to improve national preparedness to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events.¹¹

In addition to establishing the primary policy for the National Exercise Program, HSPD-8 also establishes policy and requirements for DHS to develop and submit a National Preparedness Goal to the President through the Homeland Security Council. The specific purpose of the National Preparedness Goal is to, "ensure the preparedness of the Nation to prevent, respond to, and recover from threatened and actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and

⁹ The development of a National Preparedness Goal was directed in HSPD-8. The National Preparedness Goal was published in Final Draft in December 2005.

¹⁰ Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD 8: National Preparedness (Washington D.C. 2003), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/12/20031217-6.html> (accessed November 22, 2006.)

¹¹ Ibid.

other emergencies."¹² HSPD-8 also directs that the National Preparedness Goal include "readiness metrics and elements that support the national preparedness goal including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies, and a system for assessing the Nation's overall preparedness to respond to major events."¹³ Additionally, it directs other federal departments and agencies to support the National Preparedness Goal, including "adoption of quantifiable performance measurements in the areas of training, planning, equipment, and exercises for federal incident management and asset preparedness."¹⁴

The Target Capabilities List (TCL) is the primary source for readiness metrics required in the National Preparedness Goal. Stakeholders can use these metrics to measure readiness outcomes in terms of availability, efficiency and effectiveness.¹⁵ The National Preparedness Goal along with capabilities-based planning tools provides assessment standards for national preparedness. These tools include the fifteen National Planning Scenarios, the Universal Task List (UTL), and TCL.¹⁶ Leaders in federal departments and agencies use these metrics and standards to measure government readiness and performance resulting from participation in national-level exercises.

The National Exercise Program Implementation Plan is the latest of documents which provides specific guidance

¹² Department of Homeland Security, National Preparedness Goal (Draft) (Washington D.C.: 2005), iii, (accessed November 20, 2006).

¹³ HSPD-8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ National Preparedness Goal, 21.

¹⁶ Ibid.

and requirements for the National Exercise Program. The implementation plan identifies planning, scheduling and budgeting requirements for all exercises under the NEP. Since this is a recent document (published in April 2007), most of the requirements have not been fully implemented.

2. Post-Exercise Reports, Summaries, and Reviews

A major post-exercise outcome from each exercise is the Facilitated After-Action Review (FAAR). FAAR's occur immediately following each exercise and normally include senior personnel representing each major participant involved in the exercise. The primary purpose of a FAAR is for senior leaders to identify and describe major strengths and weaknesses occurring in the exercise. Organizations can then use these strengths and weaknesses as a foundation for lessons learned. FAAR documents usually do not contain significant details, but rather bullet comments describing observations. While bullet comments do not provide in-depth information, they do identify the overall strength or weakness within the organization. At the very least, these bullet comments may identify organizational trends occurring through several exercises.

Lessons-learned databases are viable sources of information for identifying specific practices, both right and wrong, which occur in organizations. These products, unlike the bullet-based FAAR products detail specific policies, practices and/or procedures that enhance or detract from an organization's effectiveness towards meeting their mission requirements. Not only do they identify weaknesses, but they also identify actions developed to correct these weaknesses. Two common lessons

learned databases used are DHS' Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) and DOD's Joint Universal Lessons Learned System (JULLS).

Exercise Summary Reports (ESR) are important as a final collective report for a particular exercise and serve as a continuity document for future exercises. ESRs identify the training objectives of all participants, observations made of participants during the exercise, and after-action reviews of the participants. Vigilant Overview 04-2 (VO 04-2) and Unified Defense 04 (UD 04) exercises¹⁷, conducted principally at NORAD-USNORTHCOM Headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO, Washington, DC, and the States of Texas and Alaska were the first exercises to publish an ESR. This exercise and its accompanying summary report was particularly important since it was the first interagency exercise involving federal departments and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and the first exercise involving the newly established Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense (ASD(HD)). Exercise Summary Reports for other national-level exercises such as Ardent-Sentry 2005, Vigilant Shield 2006, Ardent-Sentry 2006, and Vigilant Shield 2007 provide background information and lessons learned derived from these exercises. Actual observations made by trained observers during the exercise form the basis for these exercises summary reports. These reports are critical for establishing the training effectiveness and therefore, the preparedness of those participating in the exercises.

¹⁷ These exercises were conducted concurrently.

In November 2005, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for DHS prepared a review to assess the efforts of DHS' Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness (SLGCP) to develop, plan, coordinate, and conduct the Top Officials 3 (TOPOFF 3) exercise.¹⁸ TOPOFF 3, occurring in April 2005, demonstrated the need for federal participants to be knowledgeable on their functions and the processes during disaster operations. This document is important for two reasons: (1) It identifies numerous problems associated with federal-level participation in national-level exercises; and (2) The document originates from within DHS. This report identified the absolute need to coordinate supporting efforts across all levels of government.¹⁹

3. Supplementary Documents Impacting National-level Exercises

The 9/11 Commission Report is an important document for determining whether recommendations made in the report have been implemented and whether they have increased our preparedness to prevent, detect, deter, and respond to terrorist attacks. For example, the report identifies that directing and executing paramilitary operations should shift from the CIA to DOD.²⁰ Based on this recommendation

¹⁸ Top Officials (TOPOFF) Exercises are congressionally mandated exercises requiring Federal Agency officials to participate in nation-level exercises.

¹⁹ Richard Skinner, A Review of the Top Officials 3 Exercise (Washington D.C.: 2005), 21, http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmttrpts/OIG_06-07_Nov05.pdf (accessed November 20, 2006).

²⁰ The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 415, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm> (accessed February 3, 2007).

and that Special Operations Command is the lead DOD agency for Counter-terrorism activities, exercises can be designed to stress operational considerations for these type of missions.

Another recommendation found in the 9/11 Commission report is the need to balance security with shared knowledge.²¹ Many times during exercises, information sharing comes to a complete halt due to classification issues. These issues involve information that is classified or information that is not classified but is transmitted on classified computer and communication systems. In either case, outside agencies usually do not have access to the information. As a result, information is not shared which affects the ability of the agency to act.

The Whitehouse Report, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*, identifies federal interagency coordination as a significant issue during relief efforts. The report further indicates that federal officials lacked a fundamental understanding of the National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).²² This lack of understanding is partially a result of insufficient training which could be rectified through participation in national-level exercises.

²¹ The 9/11 Commission Report, 417.

²² White House, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned* (Washington D.C.: February 2006), 70, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/> (accessed November 17, 2006).

E. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

1. Literature

Currently, there is limited information available on national level exercises. The significance of this research is that it will identify and consolidate available information in the form of legislation, policies, documents, and personal interviews. This will assist practitioners in providing future policy changes to the national exercise program and/or future exercises. This is important considering as this program matures, changes to the program and its exercises will be necessary in order to keep them relevant and improve preparedness.

2. Future Research Efforts

The significance of this research will likely assist future research efforts of others due to the consolidation of the limited information available. Again, the development of the national exercise program is an evolutionary process, which must change with future requirements and challenges. As such, the research conducted will serve as a baseline of research and assist future efforts towards changing and improving the national exercise program.

3. Immediate Consumer/Customer

The immediate consumers or customers of this research are the participants in Tier I and II exercises. This research will be important in developing future training programs and exercises involving those organizations. Another important consumer/customer is DOD as they have an important role in both homeland defense and support of civil authorities which play a large part during National-level Exercises. Included within DOD is the Joint Staff,

the services (Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines), and other major organizations such as US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM).

4. Homeland Security Practitioners and National Leaders

The research will also assist practitioners involved in homeland security, mostly at the federal level in DHS. It will provide them the baseline information for further research and development of the national exercise program and changes they need to make in order to keep the program current. This research can certainly benefit national leaders inasmuch as it exposes the seams within our federal system affecting preparedness in responding to incidents of national significance. It can also benefit Congress since they established the first requirement for national-level exercises through Top Official (TOPOFF) exercises plus they provide oversight in our Nation's preparedness. Additionally, they are responsible for appropriating funds to conduct National-level Exercises.

F. TENTATIVE SOLUTIONS OR ANSWERS

This effort has revealed four key areas in National-level Exercises DHS must revise in order to improve the training and preparedness of national partners and agencies.²³ These four areas are:

- Interagency participation
- Stability and Predictability
- Funding
- Corrective action process

²³ These revisions are intended to supplement the Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned.

Revising these four areas is important because the changes implemented will add rigor to the National Exercise Program and sufficiently challenge federal leaders, departments, and agencies during national-level exercises. Implementing these revisions into the National Exercise Program will improve our ability to interact horizontally with federal departments and agencies as well as vertically with state and private sector entities.

G. PAPER ORGANIZATION

To provide context for the reader, Chapters II through V discuss the key areas in which National-level Exercises must be examined and possibly revised. Chapter II discusses Interagency Participation in detail. Chapter III discusses requirements for achieving stability and predictability in National-level Exercises. Chapter IV talks about the need for funding and improvements to ensure exercise funding requirements are met. Chapter V examines the lesson learned and corrective action process required to ensure improper practices are collected, corrected, implemented, and shared. Finally, Chapter VI provides conclusions and the way ahead.

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II. INTERAGENCY PARTICIPATION

A. OVERVIEW

Achieving interagency participation during national-level exercises is vitally important for fully testing our federal government leaders, staffs, and policies. The need to exercise and train on national response actions is crucial in building a readiness posture capable of projecting a synchronized federal response during an operation requiring federal assistance. While this concept seems reasonable and intuitive, achieving interagency participation during exercises has been extremely problematic.

Since TOPOFF 1 and until recently, the requirement for federal interagency participation had formally not existed. As stated in Chapter I, HSPD-8, published in December 2003, directed DHS to establish a national exercise program and multi-year planning system in collaboration with state and local agencies. It also directed federal departments and agencies to participate in the process of designating national-level exercises and creating an exercise master calendar. It further required that, at the time of designating these exercises, the department or agency must also state its level of participation in these exercises.²⁴ However, HSPD-8 did not establish any requirements or conditions by which a federal department or agency was required to participate in any national-level exercise. Therefore, the decision to participate and the level of participation was primarily a decision made by each

²⁴ HSPD-8.

department or agency with no check or balance from an oversight body to determine if the level of participation was appropriate.²⁵

B. WHY INTERAGENCY PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT

Since TOPOFF 1, follow-on national exercises have clearly shown the need for interagency participation. Two key requirements inherent to these large-scale exercises create this need: (1) A necessity to employ, test, and interpret federal policies and procedures by those federal departments and agencies responsible for such policies and procedures and (2) The interaction necessary between multiple federal agencies responsible for specific actions.²⁶ In the case of the first requirement, one of the primary goals of a national level exercise is to test national policies involving response operations. Mr. Bill McNally, Director of DHS' NEP states, "The real focus is on senior leadership. The whole legislation that drove TOPOFF came from other exercises in the past where we looked at operational responses but we never engaged senior leadership and some of the decisions that would need to be made."²⁷ Engaging senior leaders and exercising decision-makers during exercises ensures whether the policies and procedures established are relevant and in the best interest of the United States and its citizens. We simply

²⁵ NORAD-USNORTHCOM, NORAD-USNORTHCOM Exercise Issues - Worldwide Joint Training and Scheduling Conference (Peterson AFB, CO, March 2006) http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/training/wjtsc06_lnncipr.ppt (accessed November 23, 2006).

²⁶ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 2.

²⁷ Mr. William McNally, (Director, National Exercise Program, Department of Homeland Security), interview with the author, Colorado Springs, CO September 13, 2007.

cannot wait for a National crisis or disaster to occur to see if the policies and procedures established by the Federal Government work.

Regarding the second requirement, interaction between governmental organizations is important for understanding an organization's operating procures, identifying contacts, and identifying and rectifying interoperability problems. Having actual policy-makers, decision-makers and their staffs participate is important for getting actual guidance and interpretation of policies tested during the exercise. Replicating this function is not feasible since the replicated response may not be relevant or reflect the true intent of the policy, procedure, or more importantly, the policy-maker. Additionally, outside response cells cannot replicate interaction between multiple federal agencies or their operations centers. By not having the full or correct interagency participation, our departments and agencies miss a big opportunity for improving our federal capability to respond to catastrophic events when they occur.

The need for adequate interagency participation during national-level exercises certainly manifested itself with the haphazard federal response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The Whitehouse Report, The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, identified federal interagency coordination as a significant issue during relief efforts. The report further indicated that federal officials lacked a fundamental understanding of the National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Incident

Management System (NIMS).²⁸ This lack of understanding was largely a result of insufficient training and participation in national-level exercises.

C. INTERAGENCY PARTICIPATION IN PAST EXERCISES

"Participation by the Departments and Agencies at the highest level of Government... that's been one of the weakest point of National-level Exercises in the past,"²⁹ states Mr. Gene Pino, Director of Training and Exercises at US Northern Command. The need for full interagency participation in national level exercises is nothing new. As stated in Chapter I, the first TOPOFF exercise occurred in 2000 and involved many different federal-level participants. An important focus of this TOPOFF Exercise was to review the interfaces and relationships between participating agencies and their senior officials and "identify any seams, gaps, and redundancy in responsibilities that affect decision-making and subsequent actions directed to resolve the scope of consequences resulting from the simulated attacks."³⁰

The observations and comments from TOPOFF 1 showed the importance of interagency participation and highlighted weaknesses which occurred due to a lack of interagency training.

Getting the senior officials from Departments and Agencies to participate in the National-level Exercise has

²⁸ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, 73.

²⁹ Mr. Gene Pino, (Director, Training and Exercises), United States Northern Command), interview with the author, Colorado Springs, CO March 2, 2007.

³⁰ The National Response Team, TOPOFF 2000 and National Capital Region (NCR) After-Action Report, (Washington D.C.: 2001), 1, <http://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blaw/dhs/TOPOFF-2000-AAR.PDF> (accessed October 6, 2007).

not occurred on the scale necessary to explore and test National policies and procedures. Although departments and agencies have participated in past national-level exercises, many of these participants served in a limited role, such as a response cell or just a representative subject matter expert (SME). As Pino states, "You did not get the level of participation at the policy level and often times, you didn't get the level of participation necessary at what we would call the operational level."³¹ Although organizations must tailor their participation in these exercises based on the scenarios, they must also ensure adequate representation in order to explore the seams and weaknesses of our federal policies and operations. This includes using "real" operations centers during an exercise and not just replicating their activities.

Past exercises have clearly shown a lack of training and coordination between departments and agencies which have participated. TOPOFF 3, occurring in April 2005, demonstrated the need for federal participants to be knowledgeable on their functions and the processes during disaster operations.³² During the exercise, federal departments and agencies provided assets and resources to a state that did not request them. A mobile 10,000-bed hospital facility with prophylaxes deployed to the State of New Jersey without their consent or knowledge. As a result, the State and its local governments were unprepared

³¹ Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO March 2, 2007.

³² Skinner, Review, 21.

to use the asset and were unclear on the financial and staffing support responsibilities required for its use.³³

Reasons for this lack of interagency participation vary. One reason was that, there is no dedicated funding for departments and agencies to support their participation in the exercises. In order for federal organizations to participate in these large-scale exercises, they usually have to use existing funds from within their organizations. This "out-of-hide" funding required of federal organizations has some effect on their participation in national level exercises. Another reason was that there was no policy in place to require federal organizations to participate. As stated previously, HSPD-8 did not require Federal Departments and Agencies to participate. It only required them to state their level of participation.

D. UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL EXERCISES

The United Kingdom (UK) also has a national exercise program which is somewhat similar to our exercise program in the US, and provides a benchmark. The Exercise Program in the UK is the responsibility of the Home Office. On their website, the UK Home Office states it is, "... the government department responsible for leading the national effort to protect the public from terrorism, crime and anti-social behaviour."³⁴ The Government and the emergency services regularly practice responses to a range of incidents, including natural disasters, accidents and terrorist incidents. Unlike the U.S.' national exercise program which has been in existence since 2000, the United

³³ Skinner, Review, 21.

³⁴ United Kingdom Home Office, "About Us," <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/> (accessed February 28, 2008).

Kingdom's exercise program has been running for more than 30 years.³⁵ Just as the U.S. national exercises test our federal level departments and agencies, these exercises also test the UK government's ability to respond to terrorist incidents and their aftermath and identify ways to improve federal response to such events.

As a result of these 30 years of experience in the UK, they have integrated their government departments much more effectively into their exercise program. Counter-terrorism and natural disaster exercises are an important part of their contingency planning and allow them to "prepare for when the worst happens."³⁶ These exercises enable the Home office and other government departments to test security-related systems thoroughly, train frontline responders such as police, ambulance and fire staff and highlight vulnerabilities in their plans.³⁷

Every year the UK's exercise program includes three annual large-scale live exercises, which involve police forces, other government departments and agencies testing counter-terrorist contingency plans. Inclusive to their program is the involvement and strategic level decision making by senior government officials. This regular practice of involving UK government departments and senior government officials in large-scale exercises provides a solid foundation for developing working relationships throughout the government and implementing and testing

³⁵ United Kingdom Home Office, "Counter-terrorism Exercises," <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/protecting-the-uk/counter-terrorism-exercises/?version=1> (accessed February 28, 2008).

³⁶ UK Home Office, "Counter-terrorism Exercises."

³⁷ Ibid.

policy decisions involving preparedness and response. In essence, it breaks down the bureaucratic barriers which exist within governments. The U.K. sets a good example for continual interagency participation in national exercises. This is the type of interagency participation that must take place with exercises in the U.S.

The effectiveness of the UK's exercise program can easily be determined based on a recent large-scale exercise, "Winter Willow". The UK designed this exercise to "fully test [their] ability to manage the effects of an influenza pandemic by playing out the decision-making process at national, regional and local levels, when there are widespread cases across the country."³⁸ Based on a regional health authority report, Exercise Winter Willow was the largest ever-contingency exercise to take place in the UK involving participants from local, regional and national level public and private organizations.³⁹ It was a very successful exercise both nationally and regionally in that it "strengthened excellent working relationships across the health sector with the Government Office Regional Resilience Team and other partners in emergency planning community."⁴⁰ Our federal departments and agencies should use this UK example of interagency participation in

³⁸ United Kingdom Cabinet Office, Exercise Winter Willow, http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/preparedness/exercises/nationalcasestudies/winter_willow.aspx (accessed 29 Feb 2007).

³⁹ Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Health Authority, Update on Pandemic Influenza, (June 2007), http://www.yorksandhumber.nhs.uk/Library/BoardMeetings-docs/2007_06_05/Papers/Enc%20H%20-%20Pandemic%20Influenza%20Update.doc, (accessed 29 Feb 07).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

large-scale exercises to must continually participate in national-level exercises to be truly effective.

E. CURRENT DHS NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM POLICIES

In April 2007, DHS published the National Exercise Program Implementation Plan (NEP IMPLAN). DHS published this IMPLAN as a result of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina. Recommendation 111, Titled, "DHS should establish a National Exercise and Evaluation Program (NEEP)," recommends DHS establish such a program to supplement the NEP. The intent was to establish an exercise doctrine for all exercises which includes, "domestic and international exercises that enable Federal, State and local governments to improve interagency coordination across all types of crises."⁴¹

1. Exercise Methodology

The NEP IMPLAN establishes the framework for exercise doctrine and methodology throughout the DHS NEP. The primary focus of this framework is to plan and conduct, "a program of exercises designed for the participation of heads of Federal departments and agencies and other key officials, which examines and evaluates emerging national-level policy issues."⁴² The Plan further lays out five main requirements for federal government officers regarding the National Exercise Program. These requirements are as follows:

a. Exercise responsibilities under the National Response Plan and other strategies, as appropriate;

⁴¹ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, 119.

⁴² National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 1.

b. Examine emerging policy issues through the conduct of exercises in a comprehensive manner on a routine basis;

c. Incorporate current threat and vulnerability assessments into exercise objectives and planning efforts;

d. Develop a corrective action process to ensure lessons from exercises are either sustained or improved as appropriate; and

e. Achieve national unity among appropriate Federal, State, local, private sector, and partner nation entities.⁴³

2. Exercise Tiers

The newly published NEP IMPLAN identifies different categories or tiers for exercises which indicate a scale of participation in exercises by participants at the federal, state and local levels. These tiers establish the priority and level for participation, with Tier I as the highest priority exercise for participation and Tier IV as the lowest. These tiers are determined from an interagency judgment based on how closely these tiers align with federal government-wide strategic and policy priorities.⁴⁴ The table below summarizes these tiers and their elements:

⁴³ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 4.

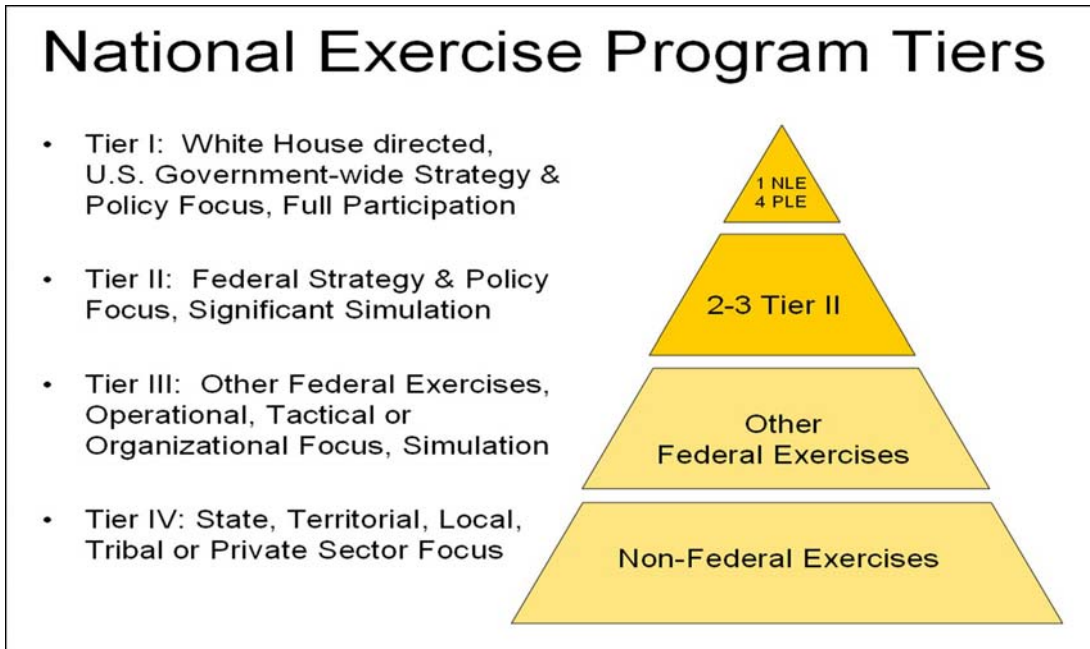


Figure 1. National Exercise Program Tiers⁴⁵

These tiers not only delineate the level of exercise, but they signify interagency participation requirements and the intended audience. Exercises requiring interagency participation are those in tiers I and II. Tier I Exercises are based on White House directed, government-wide strategy and policy issues and include all appropriate Department and Agency heads (or their deputies) and all necessary operations centers. DHS endorses Tier II exercises through the NEP process as meriting priority for interagency participation and focus on strategy and policy issues. Participation is through the National Simulation Center or as determined by each Department or Agency's leadership.

⁴⁵ National Exercise Program Briefing. (Washington D.C.: Department of Homeland Security), <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dhs/nep.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2007).

The following table depicts these additional elements based on exercise tier level:

Tier Level	Interagency Participation	Audience	Remarks
I	Required	Federal, State and Local	Dept. agency heads or deputies and operation centers.
II	Commended / Recommended	Federal, State and Local	Minimum participation least through the Nat'l Sim Center.
III	Permitted	Federal, State and Local	Participation by Federal Dept or Agency is discretionary.
IV	N/A	State and Local	

Table 1. National Exercise Tiers⁴⁶

3. Interagency Exercise Funding

The newly published NEP IMPLAN requires federal departments and agencies provide budget requests for their participation in Tier 1 exercises.⁴⁷ Following this budget submission, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reviews budget submissions to ensure they address NEP requirements. This review is not necessarily to ensure that departments and agencies meet exercise participation

⁴⁶ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 4.

⁴⁷ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 16.

requirements, but rather to fill data requirements for the President's Management Agenda.^{48,49}

According to DHS' NEP Implementation Plan, Departments and Agencies must submit their budget request two years prior to the exercise. Since each exercise has a macro-schedule covering five years, the budget submitted for each exercise occurs halfway during the five-year schedule otherwise known as Y+2⁵⁰. Of the five years covered in the scheduling of an exercise, the third or budget-year is the key year of concern for the five-year schedule.

Departments and agencies must be able to develop and submit budgets for the exercise program planned for two years out. The exercise descriptions and requirements for budget-year exercises must be detailed enough to permit this. Therefore, organizations must include descriptions for budget-year exercises which include the theme (e.g., terrorism or catastrophic natural disaster), goals (including the strategic priorities to be addressed), tentative objectives, estimated projected costs, and the scenario hazard or threat.⁵¹ However, these budgets do not

⁴⁸ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 18.

⁴⁹ The President's Management Agenda is an initiative to make the U.S. federal government more efficient and effective. Reviews examine five areas: human capital, financial accountability, competitive sourcing, e-government, and budget and performance integration. Agencies and Departments are scored each quarter by the Office of Management and Budget (and the Office of Personnel Management for Human Capital). Scoring is a on red-yellow-green stoplight depiction. (Reference - Wikipedia-
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President%27s_management_agenda) (accessed October 10, 2007)

⁵⁰ The five-year schedule is broken down as follows: Y-Year is the year the exercise is executed; Y+1 is the Planned Execution Year; Y+2 is the Budget Year; Y+3 is the Out-year 1; and Y+4 is Out-year 2.

⁵¹ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 4.

require the submitting organization to specify its level of participation in the exercise.

F. CURRENT WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES

The NEP IMPLAN provides a foundation for conducting the National Exercise Program. Although it does provide the necessary foundation for methodology and guidance, it still falls short in some areas concerning interagency participation.

1. Levels of Participation

Having the correct level of participation by members of Departments and Agencies is extremely important. The correct level of participation ensures adequacy and representation by employees from that organization. Federal organizations should base their level of participation on the scenarios developed within the exercise and the need and scope of involvement required of the department or agency. Although the NEP IMPLAN requires Federal Departments and Agencies to participate in Tier I and II exercises, it does not stipulate the required level of participation for that agency. If exercise planners develop scenarios and exercise objectives two to three years from execution and federal resource managers submit budget requests to support participation two years from executions, it makes sense that departments and agencies must determine their level of participation at least two years from execution. The NEP Executive Steering Committee (ESC) must then validate their stated level of participation. This will ensure that budgets submitted support levels of participation which in turn supports the scenarios and strategic objectives developed for the exercise.

In addition to participating at the correct levels, organizations must maintain these levels throughout the exercise. It becomes problematic when organizations change their level of participation while the exercise is ongoing. As Pino points out, "The fact that you don't have principals or operations centers that play during the course of an exercise, and you have to flip-flop back and forth between a real operations center and replicating it in a simulations cell or response cell causes a great amount of disconnect in the exercise design and the exercise."⁵² This "disconnect" is important since exercise players have to change who they coordinate with while in the middle of an exercise. Phone numbers change, people change, levels of knowledge all change, resulting in a fragmented scenario and exercise. Thus, the quality and realism of the exercise decreases.

2. Adequate Funding

One significant challenge still ongoing is the current lack of funding for interagency participation. As stated previously, departments and agencies are now required to participate in National-level Exercises and submit budget requirements two years prior to execution of the NLE. However, the first budget submission will not occur until 2008 for exercises in 2010. Therefore, funding for interagency participation still must come from within their existing budgets. If an organization's budget cannot support a required level of participation, it could significantly affect an exercise. Until funding is allocated through the budget process, funds should be

⁵² Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, March 2, 2007.

provided either through migrating funds from existing programs or requesting a congressional supplemental for exercise funding.

G. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Federal departments and agencies participating in national level exercises identify their level of participation at least two years prior to execution. These levels of participation must align with the established scenarios and strategic objectives and be reflected in the budget submitted for that exercise. Departments and Agencies must ensure their actual operations centers participate in National-level Exercise. Additionally, Federal departments and agencies participating in national level exercises must include all requirements pertaining to their participation in their budget submissions. These include, but are not limited to, personnel costs and travel costs associated with planning, executing and post-exercise activities of an NLE. Finally, until exercise funds are provided through the budget process, funding to support interagency participation must be provided either through pre-programming existing funds or passing a congressional supplemental.

H. SUMMARY

Achieving interagency participation during national-level exercises is vitally important for fully testing our federal government leaders, staffs, and policies. The need to exercise and train on national response actions involving our Federal Departments and Agencies is crucial in building a readiness posture capable of projecting a synchronized federal response during an operation requiring federal assistance. Since TOPOFF 1, follow-on national

exercises have clearly shown the need for interagency participation. In April 2007, DHS published the National Exercise Program Implementation Plan (NEP IMPLAN). Although NEP IMPLAN provides the necessary foundation for methodology and guidance, it still falls short in some areas concerning interagency participation.

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III. STABILITY AND PREDICTABILITY

A. INTRODUCTION

Stability and predictability in planning and executing national-level exercises are both critical for securing resources and funding plus getting federal and State agencies to commit to participating.⁵³ Many different factors contribute to a stable and predictable environment for planning and executing national-level exercises. Some of the more important factors include identifying federal-level participation, locking-in exercise dates, and identifying scenarios. These items are critical for scenario development and synchronization, funding and resources requirements, and observer/controller requirements. Stability and predictability is lacking within NEP exercises which then affects all other aspects of resourcing, scheduling, and execution of these large, full-scale, multi-echelon exercises.

Historically, stability and predictability in planning and coordinating national-level exercises has always been problematic for planners to achieve. Until the President formally approved the National Exercise Program early in 2007, there was no established process for planning at the national level. As such, long-term planning policies and tools did not exist for exercise planners to properly develop, coordinate, and synchronize national exercises. And even though the DHS has an approved National Exercise Program, achieving stability and predictability will still be hard to achieve.

⁵³ NORAD-USNORTHCOM Exercise Issues.

B. DEFINING STABILITY AND PREDICTABILITY

In order to fully identify the major issues concerning stability and predictability, it becomes necessary to provide functional definitions for these two terms as they apply to National-level exercises. For the purposes of this paper, predictability pertains to long-term (more than one year) aspects of scheduling and systemic planning of National-level Exercises. Developing a long-term exercise schedule, to include venues and participants, is an example of predictability. The EP achieves stability by eliminating unnecessary or unneeded changes to the exercise plan(s) and adhering to timelines, resources, and scenarios, as well as synchronizing activities and events involved in a National-level exercise. Stability and predictability are extremely important to both exercise planners and participants. Stability and predictability allows planners to better develop better exercises because the scenarios have been identified, the resources allocated, and participants selected. Likewise, stability and predictability provides an expectation with participants from Federal organizations of future training, budget developments and personnel commitments. As such, stability and predictability are essential for securing exercise resources and funding plus getting federal and State agencies to commit to participating in these exercises.⁵⁴

C. KEY FACTORS AFFECTING PREDICTABILITY AND STABILITY

Planning national level exercises is a long and complex process involving many participants, resources and time. Many different factors contribute to a stable and

⁵⁴ NORAD-USNORTHCOM Exercise Issues.

predictable environment for planning and executing national-level exercises. Some of the most important and basic factors necessary to achieve predictability and stability include identifying exercise participants, identifying and locking-in exercise dates, and establishing exercise scenarios.

1. Identifying Participants

In past exercises, exercise planner identified players from federal organizations to participate based on the type of event or disaster occurring in the exercise and the normal functional role played in responding to the specific type of incident. For example, a hurricane scenario would have significant participation by FEMA. A biological event would normally have extensive participation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A nuclear or radiological event would have large participation by Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). For state and local participants, selection to play in National-level exercises depended on their ability to commit the time and resources in planning and executing the events. In some cases, states may already be planning readiness exercises with local municipalities. Federal organizations⁵⁵ then solicit these states to participate in an NLE. Some problems associated with this method are that some states may not give a commitment to participate until well into the planning cycle.

Identifying exercise participants and their level of organizational participation as early as possible in the planning process is necessary. These two items are vital

⁵⁵ Usually FEMA or DHS invited state and local participants.

for developing and synchronizing scenarios, identifying funding and resources requirements, and defining and resourcing observer/controller requirements. One past example of how these items affected stability and predictability occurred during the year-long planning process for TOPOFF 3 in 2005. During this exercise, several Federal-level exercise participants did not determine their roles or levels of participation until just a few months before the exercise. These delays placed additional stress on the planning process for the exercise. Eventually, these participants determined their exercise roles and levels of participation, requiring DHS to seamlessly integrate these participants into the exercise within a few weeks before the start of the exercise. The efforts required to integrate these last minute agencies included one-on-one meetings and mobile training teams.⁵⁶

2. Locking-in Exercise Dates

Locking-in exercise dates is yet another factor affecting stability and predictability. Exercise planners try to identify exercise dates three to five years prior to execution. They then attempt to lock in these dates two years out from execution of the exercise. However, locking in exercise dates can prove challenging. Such was the case with Vigilant Shield 07, a DOD exercise focusing on Homeland Defense. In July 2006, DOD officials decided to move the exercise one month from November 2006 to December 2006. The reason OSD gave for moving the exercise dates was to deflect visibility of the exercise while mid-term

⁵⁶ Skinner, Review, 14.

elections were taking place.⁵⁷ The impact of this change required significant logistical and operational changes to the exercise plus schedule changes of exercise participants. This required exercise planners to go back, re-coordinate, and re-synchronize resources, participants, and operational forces.⁵⁸

3. Establishing Exercise Scenarios

Another item contributing to stability and predictability in National-level exercises is identifying and locking-in scenarios as early as possible. Normally, exercise planners identify scenarios during the exercise Concept Working Group conference, which usually occurs thirteen to fourteen months from exercise execution. During the Concept Working Group, scenarios are refined with a basic overall concept plus resource and force requirements. The building of scenarios commences from that point with further coordination occurring during the initial and mid-planning conferences. This was the process for exercise planning and scenario development for Exercise Ardent Sentry 2006 scheduled for execution May 4-18, 2006. Approximately four weeks prior to execution of the exercise, DHS decided to add a hurricane scenario to the onset of the exercise. Injecting this scenario so close to the execution of the exercise resulted in significant coordination and synchronization efforts between NORAD-USNORTHCOM staff, the Joint Staff, and both DHS and FEMA headquarters. Exercise planners conducted meetings, video-teleconferences and conference telephone calls daily to

⁵⁷ This information was common knowledge among exercise planners at HQ NORAD-USNORTHCOM.

⁵⁸ NORAD-USNORTHCOM Exercise Issues.

ensure this new scenario, built as a replica of Hurricane Katrina, was properly developed and synchronized by all organizations at all levels. Not only was this a significant undertaking, but it took time away from exercise planners to complete and refine planning requirements for the other four scenarios occurring in the exercise.⁵⁹ Sometimes, late additions or changes to scenarios are necessary due to new requirements or changes to normal business practices. In these cases, exercise planners must change the plan and incorporate the changes. However, it should only occur when absolutely necessary.

D. CURRENT CONSTRUCT - EXERCISE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

With the implementation of the National Exercise Program early in 2007, DHS has developed an exercise planning process called "Exercise Program Management".⁶⁰ According to DHS, Exercise Program Management is "...a collaborative approach that integrates the different resources of various agencies, organizations, and individuals from both the public and private sectors. Exercise program management is directed toward achieving the objectives established during the multi-year planning process, as described in an entity's Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan."⁶¹

Conducting an exercise involves comprehensive coordination among participating multiple agencies and officials. The Exercise Program Management process divides individual exercises into five overarching phases:

⁵⁹ NORAD-USNORTHCOM Exercise Issues.

⁶⁰ HSEEP Volume 1, 13.

⁶¹ HSEEP Volume 1, 5.

Foundation, Design and Development, Conduct, Evaluation, and Improvement Planning.⁶² These phases are depicted in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Exercise Program Management⁶³

Of the five phases in Exercise Program Management, an exercise achieves a stable and predictable environment through planning actions occurring during the Foundation Phase and Design and Development phase. The Four-year

⁶² National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 7.

⁶³ From Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, Volume 1: HSEEP Overview and Exercise Program Management (Washington D.C.: February 2007), 8.

Strategic Exercise Cycle and the Five-year Exercise Planning Schedule are the two key products resulting from this planning process.

These phases are very similar to the phases used by DOD in developing military exercises. The Joint Event Life Cycle (JELC) also has five distinct phases: Phase 1 - Design; Phase 2 - Planning; Phase 3 - Preparation; Phase 4 - Execution; and Phase 5 - Evaluation.⁶⁴ The scope and complexity of the training event determine the length of time to complete the JELC. For training events utilizing a full-scale exercise for broader training audiences at multiple echelons such as combatant command, the JELC may span a period of many months and sometimes as much as 12 to 18 months for a major joint exercise.⁶⁵ The figure below depicts an example of a JELC for one of these types of exercises.

⁶⁴ CJCS Guide 3501G, The Joint Training System : A Primer for Senior Leaders, (Washington D.C.: 2006), 28, http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/g3501.pdf (accessed February 29, 2008).

⁶⁵ Ibid., 28-29.

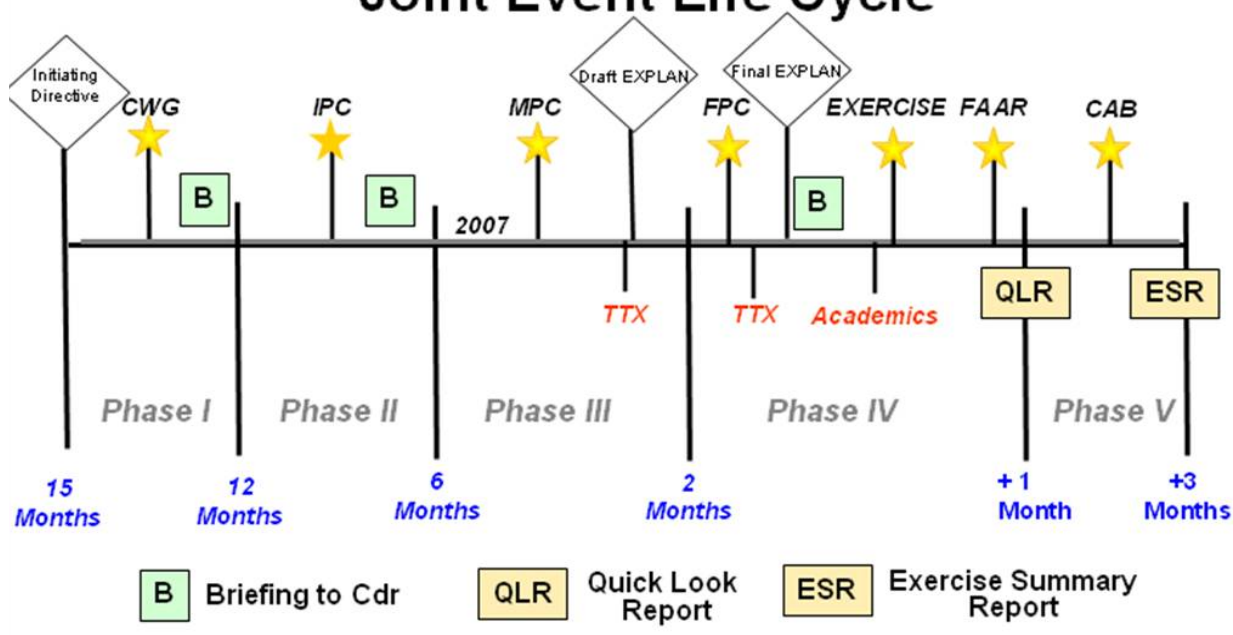


Figure 3. Joint Event Life Cycle⁶⁶

E. FOUR-YEAR STRATEGIC EXERCISE CYCLE

In order to institute a level of stability into its National Exercise Program, DHS' National Exercise Division has established a 4-year strategic exercise cycle based on Presidential elections.⁶⁷ Table 2 depicts this four-year cycle.

⁶⁶ From Slide 11, NORAD-USNORTHCOM, Joint Training and Exercise Planning Group, (Colorado Springs, CO: 2006), 11 (accessed February 29, 2008).

⁶⁷ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 7.

Basic Theme	Timeframe in Cycle
Transition Training Program - Multiple Themes	New Presidential Administration (i.e., Incoming 2009)
Domestic Incident: Non-Terrorism	2 nd Year of Pres. Administration (i.e., 2010)
International/Defense Crisis	3 rd Year of Pres. Administration (i.e., 2011)
Domestic Incident: Terrorism	4 th Year of Pres. Administration (i.e., 2012)

Table 2. Four-Year Exercise Cycle⁶⁸

This four-year "Presidential" exercise cycle, is a progressive training methodology intended to add rigor to succeeding National exercises. The year a president is installed into office, the new administration undergoes a Transition Training Program.⁶⁹ This transition training culminates in a capstone Functional Exercise, which serves as an immersive experience for the senior officials.⁷⁰ Following the Transition Training program, the themes depicted in Table 2, above, provide the basis for exercises conducted in the remaining three follow-on years.

F. FIVE YEAR EXERCISE PLANNING SCHEDULE

In addition to the four-year "Presidential" cycle, DHS has also established an exercise-planning schedule which coordinates actions from the current exercise year to four years out. The following table identifies these years and their descriptions:

⁶⁸ Eugenio Pino, National Exercise Program Update, (Colorado Springs, CO: 2007), 5.

⁶⁹ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Identified Year	Planning Requirements
Current- Year (Y) (i.e., 2008)	No changes are permitted to the current-year schedule. Final planning and synchronization are conducted.
Planned Execution Year (Y+1) (i.e., 2009)	Any adjustments based on requirements submitted during Y+2 should be made with caution.
Budget-Year (Y+2) (i.e., 2010)	Departments and Agencies submit budgets for the exercise program planned for this year. Budget information must include (at minimum) the theme, goals/strategic priorities, tentative objectives, estimated projected costs, scenario threat, and the levels of participation for each Federal Department and Agency.
Outyear-One (Y+3) (i.e., 2011)	Refine exercise theme, hazard, and tentative priority interagency objectives and the scenario hazard or threat.
Outyear-Two (Y+4) (i.e., 2012)	Identify theme, goals, tentative objectives, and the scenario threat.

Table 3. Five Year Schedule⁷¹

These two planning tools, the four-year exercise cycle and the five-year planning cycle provide predictability and stability. The long-term planning requirements derived from both the four-year "presidential cycle" and the five-year exercise schedule provide predictability. Stability is provided by "locking-in" exercise requirements within

⁷¹ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 3-4.

twelve months from exercise execution and eliminating unnecessary or capricious changes.

G. ANNUAL EXERCISING PROGRAMMING PROCESS

In order to develop and review exercises the year prior to execution, DHS uses their newly developed Annual Exercising Programming Process. This process provides a timeline and systematic means for developing and achieving requirements necessary for Tier I through IV exercises. The table below depicts the basic elements and their timelines.

Month	NEP Annual Programming Process Action
July	Budget Call
August	Strategic Review (Threat/Vulnerability/CAP)
September	DRAFT NEP Annual Planning Guidance
October	Petitions for Near-term Schedule Changes.
December	Exercise Proposals due
January	NEP Exercise Scheduling Conference
February	Budget Transmission to Congress
March	Draft five-year Schedule
May	NLE conducted
June	Five-year Schedule Approved

Table 4. Annual Exercising Programming Process⁷²

⁷² After Table 2, *Summary Annual NEP Timeline*, National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 9-10.

Of all the actions listed above, the NEP Exercise Scheduling Conference occurring in January of each year is critical since exercises, exercise dates, and participant conflicts are resolved.

H. CURRENT CHALLENGES

As previously stated, DHS has established a four-year cycle based on national elections plus a five-year exercise planning schedule. However, these established processes do not necessarily guarantee stability and predictability in national exercises. National leaders must implement additional actions and/or processes in order to establish a stable and predictive environment for planning National-level Exercises. Some important actions include establishing priorities, providing funding, and "spreading the wealth" to maximize exercise participation and effectiveness.

1. Establishing Priorities

Establishing priorities for scenarios and training objectives for exercises is an extremely important element for national exercises. However, establishing those priorities is not always easy. Departments and Agencies have their own priorities for exercise scenarios and objectives. According to Mr. William McNally, Director of DHS' National Exercise Department, "Everybody's got their own priorities about what's the most important. That in itself is a problem and that's one we struggle with."⁷³ This creates a disjointed approach when trying to establish the five year planning schedule since departments and

⁷³ McNally Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, September 13, 2007.

agencies are likely to believe that their priorities are the most important during Tier I and II exercises.

It seems evident that priorities for exercises should come from past exercises, actual events, or guidance from national leaders such as Congress or the President. The four-year cycle provides a theme for an exercise but no detailed scenarios or objectives. Likewise, the 5-year strategic plan calls for identifying scenarios and objectives, but without guidance from national leaders, deciding on scenarios and national objectives is problematic. According to McNally, "We're asking under the NEP that we get that direction from senior authorities. We need to understand the vulnerabilities to our national infrastructure. What are the gaps? We need to get the White House to tell us these [issues] are our priorities. These are the key issues for us right now. And that [guidance] we want to lay out into our five year [strategic] schedule."⁷⁴ Therefore, getting guidance from our national leaders for priorities on scenarios and objectives is an important element the five-year strategic schedule must incorporate.

2. Proper Funding

Although funding will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, it certainly bears further discussion as it pertains to stability and predictability. Funding is an important resource for providing stability and predictability in national exercises because it is tied directly to establishing the Five-year Exercise Schedule. It allows getting advance commitments for participants,

⁷⁴ McNally Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, September 13, 2007.

transportation, and exercise resources. Without funding identified at least two years prior to the execution for that particular exercise, the planning and exercise expectation grinds to a halt. As Mr. McNally points out, "Funding would help us get the national [five-year] exercise schedule aligned."⁷⁵ Unfortunately, lack of funding hinders planning for exercises and locking in participation well before execution of exercises.

3. Spreading the Wealth

Spreading the wealth involves ensuring all departments and agencies are exercised and not just a select few. Exercises should be planned and scenarios developed to incorporate as many Federal Departments and Agencies as possible. This ensures that these departments and agencies achieve a higher level of preparedness, which in turn ensures they are ready to respond when called upon. In addition, it creates a more realistic exercise since, as the federal response to Hurricane Katrina showed the nation, a catastrophic event of that magnitude would most certainly involve all Departments and Agencies.

Another perspective of spreading the wealth is to spread it geographically. For example, hurricane preparedness exercises should not be limited to the Gulf Coast region nor should scenarios involving terrorist activities only occur in New York or the National Capital Region. Spreading the wealth geographically ensures all federal, state and local entities will likely get a chance in participating in the full-scale national exercises. It will also prevent "exercise burnout" from occurring by

⁷⁵ McNally Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, September 13, 2007.

exercising the same regions over and over. Finally, it allows the Federal Government to fully exercise plans and policies horizontally with other federal organizations and vertically with state and local entities.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for National-level exercises to be effective, DHS must incorporate changes into the current construct of the National Exercise Program. One key change is for National leaders to establish priorities for exercising scenarios and identifying national objectives. In addition, Congress must provide adequate funding to federal organizations in order to ensure their full participation in national exercises. Furthermore, exercises must be developed, planned and executed to include equitable participation across Departments and Agencies and vertically to include state and local entities. Finally, organizations must conduct NLEs across geographic regions to meet the vertical and horizontal challenges.

J. SUMMARY

Stability and predictability in planning and executing national-level exercises are crucial for securing exercise resources and funding plus getting federal and State agencies to commit to participating in these exercises. Many different factors contribute to a stable and predictable environment for planning and executing national-level exercises. Some of the most important factors include identifying federal-level participation, locking-in exercise dates, and identifying scenarios. The four-year strategic cycle and the five-year planning schedule are two planning methodologies recently instituted

by DHS which should help provide stability and predictability in National-level Exercises.

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IV. FUNDING NATIONAL LEVEL EXERCISES

A. INTRODUCTION

Exercises are the primary tool used by the federal government for evaluating its capability to perform in a crisis or emergency. National Level Exercises (NLE) involves many organizations at the Federal, State, and local levels to execute and validate current plans and policies pertinent to preventing or responding to man-made or natural disasters. The financial and human resources necessary to plan, execute and assess a national-level exercise are immense. One significant challenge of National Level Exercises is the availability of federal funding to facilitate participation by exercise players, planners, and support staff with requirements throughout the lifecycle of each exercise. Without sufficient funding, organizations have few options regarding the ability to fund their participation in large, full-scale exercises. Some of these options include using funds from current operational budgets or providing minimum support or participation during large exercises. However, either option may be problematic if the department or agency participation requirements are substantial.

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As has been stated previously in this document, Homeland Security Presidential Directive #8 (HSPD-8) directed the Department of Homeland Security to establish a National Exercise Program and also directed Federal Departments and Agencies to participate in the process of designating national-level exercises and state their level

of participation in those exercises.⁷⁶ However, there was no stipulation in HSPD-8 that Federal Departments and Agencies actually participate in these exercises nor did it mandate Congress provide funding to facilitate Federal Department and Agency participation in these large, full-scale exercises. As a result, achieving full interagency participation during past national-level exercises has not occurred. This is considering Federal Departments and Agencies have not budgeted or received funding for their participation.

This need for interagency participation certainly became apparent during the federal response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The Whitehouse Report, The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, identified Federal interagency coordination as a significant issue during relief efforts. The report further indicated that Federal officials lacked a fundamental understanding of the National Response Plan (NRP) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).⁷⁷ This lack of understanding in both the NRP and NIMS was a result of insufficient interagency training which Department and Agency participation in NLE exercises would rectify.⁷⁸ This leads back to a lack of funding for these Departments and Agencies to facilitate their participation. Unfortunately, the Katrina Lessons Learned did not identify problems with interagency exercise participation or a lack of funding

⁷⁶ HSPD-8.

⁷⁷ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, 13.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 73.

which facilitates their participation in NLEs and thus improve integration and response capabilities of all response providers.

C. THE NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM

The NEP IMPLAN establishes a framework for the National Exercise Program (NEP), including overall guidance, roles and responsibilities, timelines, and objectives. As stated previously in Chapter II, the NEP categorizes exercises into four separate tiers which reflect the relative priority for interagency participation, with Tier I as the highest and Tier IV as the lowest.⁷⁹ Although the NEP IMPLAN provides this information in significant detail, it provides very little information or guidance in terms of federal Department or Agency funding to support their participation in NLEs. It does state, however, that, "All Departments and Agencies shall budget for support to NEP Tier I exercises...".⁸⁰ This implies that no other funding is available to federal Departments and Agencies for their participation in NLEs. Therefore, two budget aspects tie the ability of a federal Department or Agency to participate in an NLE: (1) Submitting a budget request forecasting their funding requirements for participation in an NLE, and, (2) Receiving the actual amounts budgeted for that year. Mr. Pino, Director of Training and Exercise at United States Northern Command identified the impact funding has on interagency participation in National Level Exercises. According to Pino, "Here's the bottom line. The National Exercise Program will, in my opinion, will become a paper

⁷⁹ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

tiger... if the Departments and Agencies we require to participate do not have a funding line associated with the National Exercise Program.”⁸¹

D. FIVE YEAR PLAN

As pointed out in chapter III of this document, DHS has developed, in coordination with the heads of other relevant departments and agencies, a five-year schedule of exercises in order to systematically layout the macro-level planning for exercises. This schedule is coordinated with the Departments and Agencies, processed, and approved the Homeland Security Council (HSC) and National Security Council (NSC).⁸² The schedule includes an appendix with summary descriptions of the scheduled Tier I and Tier II exercises. Based on this five-year schedule, the first time a department or agency could actually expect to see funds, based on a budget submission in 2008, is 2010 and more likely, 2011. That is if DHS and exercise planners have developed adequate exercise information that far in advance in which to submit the budget request. Additionally, even if these budgets are submitted, there is no guarantee that federal funds allocated will be sufficient to allow adequate federal organization participation in exercises. This puts the actual exercise at risk since important Federal-level players are unable to participate. Therefore, the importance of funding these exercises has a direct impact on effectiveness of our National Exercise Program and, in turn, the preparedness of our nation to respond to natural or man-made disaster events.

⁸¹ Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, June 15, 2007.

⁸² National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 4.

E. NEP BUDGET OVERVIEW

DHS provides funding for exercises through two different programs, the National Exercise Program (NEP) and the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). The NEP focus is to train national leaders and Departmental and Agency staff, plus facilitate collaboration among partners at all levels of government for assigned homeland security missions. HSEEP provides the governing doctrine and policy which all DHS funded exercises are designed, developed, conducted, and evaluated.⁸³

DHS' National Exercise Program budget for 2008 is fifty million dollars. This is about the same amount in past years. Table 5 below shows the National Exercise Program budget for the current and previous three years:

Fiscal Year	2008	2007	2006	2005
\$ in Millions	50	48	59	52

Table 5. National Exercise Funding, FY 2005-2008^{84, 85}

Of the amount shown above, approximately 30% of the funds support requirements (i.e., planning and logistics) for Top Officials (TOPOFF) exercises and approximately 50%

⁸³ HSEEP, Volume 1, 7.

⁸⁴ Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, FY 2006 Program Budget Review, (Washington D.C.: Department of Homeland Security), 8 (accessed December 27, 2007).

⁸⁵ National Emergency Management Association, Preliminary Analysis of the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008 For the Department of Homeland Security, 4, <http://www.nemaweb.org/?1811> (accessed September 25, 2007).

funds state-level exercise support requirements. The remainder of the funding is for specialized exercises.⁸⁶

DHS' HSEEP provides some funding to states and local jurisdictions through the grant program to support participation in exercises. States receive an annual allocation of grant funds from DHS and may use a portion of these funds to enhance their State and local prevention and response capabilities through terrorism exercises. State participants must use these grant funds in accordance with the State Homeland Security Strategy. States can also combine grant funds with funds from other agencies to support a single exercise or set of exercises.⁸⁷ The exercise funding obtained through the DHS Grants Program provides staffing and exercise support to state and local Agencies involved in exercises.⁸⁸ This type of funding support is important for securing participation from states and local jurisdictions in all types of exercises.

Although DHS provides funding to states and their subordinate jurisdictions, there has been no dedicated or formalized funding program for Federal Departments and Agencies. Mr. Pino further explains the issue: "The grant program goes down [to the states]. It doesn't go to either Department and Agencies so those other Departments and Agencies still have to come up with their own money to

⁸⁶ FY 2006 Program Budget Review, 8.

⁸⁷ HSEEP, Volume 1, A-1.

⁸⁸ Department of Homeland Security, Exercises and Training and Exercise Plan Workshops: Direct Support Applications and Users' Handbook (Washington D.C.: October 2006), 7-9, http://www.state.il.us/iema/training/Exercises/ExerciseDownloads/Application_for_Exercise_Funding.doc (accessed November 26, 2007).

participate in exercises."⁸⁹ Therefore, in order for federal organizations to participate in these large-scale exercises, they must use existing funds from within their organizations. Because of this, participation in national level exercises by federal level organizations is extremely limited. No definitive funding stream or guidance exacerbates the problem of federal interagency participation in NLEs. Use of funds from a Department's or Agency's operating budget constrains participation in exercises. Without centralized or dedicated funding support, federal organizations have had to rely upon the "health" of their Department or Agency's budget. If their budget is unable to support a required level of participation, it would likely curtail their participation which could significantly impact an exercise, such as it has for NLE 2-08, scheduled to occur in May 2008. In this exercise, FEMA is providing a simulated Joint Field Office (JFO) instead establishing a fully manned and functional JFO due to funding constraints. As Pino points out, "There has to be more than just the grant program if we're really going to make the National Exercise Program successful."⁹⁰

F. EXERCISE FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Funding budgeted and allocated for National Level Exercises must address exercise requirements from a holistic perspective and must not be limited to just the execution portion of national level exercises. Although the execution portion is the largest activity of any exercise, the planning portion and assessment portion are

⁸⁹ Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, June 15, 2007.

⁹⁰ Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, June 15, 2007.

also important phases. Significant planning must occur prior to the execution of exercises in order to properly coordinate and synchronize the myriad of tasks and interactions between public and private organizations at all levels. Much of the planning occurs through the various conferences held throughout the planning lifecycle for each exercise and involves travel and personnel costs for hundreds of participants. Following an exercise, organizations are still involved with tasking, synchronizing, and implementing the corrective actions identified during the exercise, as well as attending after-action conferences specifically for the exercise. Although this is a smaller effort than the planning or execution portions of the exercise lifecycle, it is a vitally important effort since federal, state and local organizations base future policy and legislative decisions on these corrective actions. In addition, organizations must fund extra training required in preparation for NLEs, especially if the training is important for the success of the exercise.

As pointed out in Chapter II of this document, Federal Departments and Agencies must provide budget information for NLEs. Although the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is responsible for reviewing budget submissions to ensure they address NEP requirements, this is mostly for ensuring support for the President's Management Agenda.⁹¹ As such, no federal committee or organization has the specific responsibility for ensuring that budget submissions by Federal Departments and Agencies adequately

⁹¹ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 4.

meet operational requirements for planning, executing and assessing national level exercises. Therefore, a large void remains for ensuring Federal organizations have adequate funding for their participation in NLEs.

Additionally, Department of Defense has a myriad of exercises outside the NLEs with a committed goal to integrate their operations with other Federal Departments and Agencies. Therefore, DOD places many requests on these federal organizations to participate in these DOD-centric exercises. Unfortunately, these Departments and Agencies woefully lack the resources, in both funding and manpower, to meet DOD exercise participation needs. According to Pino, "The reality is,... if every single COCOM (Combatant Commander) is telling the Department that interagency integrated operations is their number one priority,... then we have to realize that they can't fund and they can't participate at the levels we want them to because of these fiscal constraints."⁹² Pino proposes that DOD should be able to pay personnel and travel costs in order to get other federal organization representation. As Pino points out, "We don't have any problems paying a contractor DOD money to put a table-top [exercise] together. But we have policy restrictions on doing the same thing and taking [DOD] money and getting people [from other Departments and Agencies] who know their stuff to participate in our exercises. It's absolutely crazy." Pino goes on to recommend that policy or legislative actions must take place to allow for this cross-department funding.

⁹² Pino Interview, Colorado Springs, CO, June 15, 2007.

G. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure federal departments and agencies receive adequate funding for their participation in NLEs, responsible parties must implement the following three recommendations: First, Federal Departments and Agencies participating in national level exercises must include all requirements pertaining to their participation in their budget submissions. These include, but are not limited to, personnel costs and travel costs associated with planning, executing and post-exercise activities of an NLE. Second Federal Departments and Agencies participating in national level exercises must submit their budgets IAW budgeting procedures. In addition, an executive-level committee, such as the Homeland Security Counsel, must review budget submissions to ensure they meet exercise participation requirements before, during, and after an NLE. Finally, Department and Agency leaders must make policy changes to allow for cross-department funding of personnel to participate in exercises. This will ensure those Departments and Agencies requiring personnel from other Federal organization provide adequate funding for their participation.

H. SUMMARY

In order to exercise the full extent of Federal Department and Agency participation during NLEs, a formal funding process must be identified and implemented. As a minimum, this funding process must include all exercise requirements, it must have sufficient oversight from an executive-level committee, and it must include other policy changes which allow cross-department or agency funding. The preparedness of our government is directly tied to

federal participation in NLEs which, in turn, is directly tied to adequate funding for federal partners to participate. The importance of funding these exercises has a direct impact on effectiveness of the NEP and the preparedness of our nation to respond to natural or man-made disaster events.

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V. CORRECTIVE ACTION PROGRAM

A. INTRODUCTION

A significant shortfall affecting the preparedness of our nation is the lack of a remedial program for identifying issues, making assignments to resolve the issues, and tracking progress towards resolving and implementing those resolutions.⁹³ As such, there has been no formal system in place to systematically identify and improve deficiencies or shortcomings occurring during national events, such as Hurricane Katrina or exercises, such as TOPOFF. Furthermore, many of the same deficiencies keep occurring during exercises and real world events.

Remedial or corrective action programs are extremely important mechanisms within organizations for identifying, analyzing, and addressing deficiencies and shortcomings identified during exercises, policy discussions, and real-world events. They provide a means for improving practices and procedures occurring within an organization, as well as across multiple organizations. DHS has recently unveiled a corrective action program (CAP) intended to develop, prioritize, track and analyze corrective actions identified from events and exercises. Prior to the implementation of the DHS CAP, there was no national-level remedial system in place to correct flawed policies and procedures across our government.

⁹³ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 3.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Lessons Learned Information System

As stated in Chapter I, HSPD-8 directed DHS "... to collect, analyze, and disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and information from exercises, training events, research, and other sources, including actual incidents, and establish procedures to improve national preparedness to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events."⁹⁴ DHS did this by establishing its Lessons Learned Information System (LLIS). LLIS is a repository of lessons learned collected from federal, state and local departments and agencies across the country. LLIS.gov is the national database of Lessons Learned, best practices, innovative ideas, and preparedness information for stakeholders in homeland security and emergency response disciplines at the federal, state and local levels.

In addition to being a repository of information, LLIS.gov is also a data network intended to allow homeland security and emergency response professionals from across the country share their knowledge and expertise. However, LLIS.gov is not a remedial program to improve national practices and procedures. It does not include a means to actively distribute lessons learned to appropriate organizations, for assigning responsibility for resolving the lessons identified across departments and agencies, or for monitoring the progress of resolving lessons identified and implementing those resolutions.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ HSPD-8.

⁹⁵ Richard Skinner, Statement before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington D.C., March 8, 2006, 19.

2. No Past Corrective Action Process

Until the first few months of 2007, there was no overarching CAP program at the National-level even though some federal departments and agencies did have internal corrective action processes. Procedures for DHS, or any other government organization, to track, resolve, and implement lessons learned from past exercises (and other events) across government organizations were not in place. This resulted in many incorrect actions and bad or poor practices occurring during exercises and real incidents to go uncorrected. As a result, many of these shortfalls resurfaced during later events and exercise participants repeated the same incorrect actions.

During the After-Action Conference or "hot-wash" immediately following TOPOFF 3, participants said the same issues identified in previous exercises reoccurred during TOPOFF 3. One of these reoccurrences was amending the definition of a major disaster in the Stafford Act to include WMD events. During the TOPOFF 2 exercise, Illinois state officials requested federal assistance under the Stafford Act but the simulated events in Illinois did not qualify as a major disaster because biological disasters were not included in the Act, and FEMA interpreted the request as ineligible. Although the Stafford Act was identified as needing to be amended following TOPOFF 2, no action was taken to amend the Act to include biological events and FEMA has not changed its interpretation.^{96,97}

⁹⁶ Skinner, Review, 30.

⁹⁷ To date, the act has still not been amended.

In November 2005, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for DHS prepared a review to assess the efforts by DHS' Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness (SLGCP) to develop, plan, coordinate, and conduct the Top Officials 3 (TOPOFF 3) exercise.⁹⁸ The OIG report provided fourteen recommendations for implementation into future exercises. Of the fourteen recommendations provided, two of the recommendations were resolved and the responsible offices in DHS did not even acknowledge or act upon the remaining twelve recommendations. The twelve recommendations, therefore, remain unresolved.⁹⁹

Unfortunately, the problem with re-identifying lessons learned from previous events was not isolated to just exercises. Many of the Lessons Learned identified in the Hurricane Katrina Report were the same Lessons Learned from TOPOFF 3 conducted approximately four months earlier:

The most recent Top Officials ("TOPOFF") exercise in April 2005 revealed the Federal government's lack of progress in addressing a number of preparedness deficiencies, many of which participants had identified in previous exercises. This lack of progress reflects, in part, the absence of a remedial action program to systematically address lessons learned from exercises.¹⁰⁰

C. CURRENT FEDERAL LEVEL REMEDIAL ACTION PROGRAMS

1. Department of Defense

DOD has used Lessons Learned to improve training, practices, and procedures found to be substandard through internal or external evaluations and observations. The

⁹⁸ Skinner, Review, Preface.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 32-38.

¹⁰⁰ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned, 76.

services document military training exercises and operations in after-action reports, which include lessons learned information. Units of all sizes have access to this information and use it to improve their tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to increase their combat readiness and effectiveness. One of the key benefits which services and the Joint Staff derive from lessons learned is the ability to identify recurring and systemic weaknesses in key areas. The services and the Joint Staff can then document and publish problem areas and trends, allowing others to benefit from these experiences and institute corrective actions. According to senior military leaders, "weaknesses can be addressed through changes to such areas as doctrine, training and education, tactics, leadership, and materiel."¹⁰¹ The Army's lessons learned program established in 1996 has been in existence the longest.¹⁰² All the other services established their own lessons learned process after that, as well as the Joint Staff. The Joint Staff established the Joint Center for Lessons Learned to maintain and manage lessons learned obtained from joint military operations and exercises. DOD disseminates these lessons learned, which include ways to improve practices or overcome problems, among joint commands and the services.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ United States General Accounting Office, Military Training: Potential to Use Lessons Learned to Avoid Past Mistakes Is Largely Untapped, (Washington D.C.: 1995), 10, <http://www.gao.gov/archive/1995/ns95152.pdf> (accessed April 29, 2007).

¹⁰² GAO, Military Training, 11.

¹⁰³ GAO, Military Training, 12-13.

2. Federal Emergency Management Agency

RAMP - Remedial Action Management Program is FEMA's process for ensuring lessons result in solutions. This program combines the essential components of a lessons learned system into an overarching process designed to fix lessons identified during national events. These essential or key components include collecting issues from "hotwashes" and after-action reviews around the country, consolidating issues into a single report, assigning responsibility to parties for fixing problems, and monitoring the progress of resolving and implementing solutions.¹⁰⁴

3. Other Organizations

Other federal departments and agencies, such as the Department of Energy and NASA, have some type of remedial program to identify, resolve, track, and disseminate lessons within their specific organization. These programs only work internally within their organizations. There has not existed a process or means to assign, resolve, track, and implement lessons horizontally across entities or vertically between local, state and federal entities.

D. DHS' CORRECTIVE ACTION PROGRAM

DHS has recently implemented a Corrective Action Process called the CAP System. This system is an internet-based application intended to allow Federal, State, and local officials to develop, prioritize, track, and analyze corrective actions following exercises and real-world incidents. As stated on its website, DHS developed the CAP System for the purpose of systematically translating exercise and real-world outputs - such as findings,

¹⁰⁴ Skinner Statement, 21.

recommendations, lessons learned, and best practices into meaningful inputs for nation-wide homeland security plans, programs, and budgets. The corrective actions processed through the CAP System are intended to improve organizational practices and procedures, such as NIMS, the National Response Plan,¹⁰⁵ and various national strategies, not to mention existing legislation and policies. Accordingly, heads of departments and agencies at the federal level, plus state and local officials must be involved in reviewing and implementing corrective actions affecting their particular organization.

1. Relationship Between the NEP and CAP

As it pertains to the NEP, DHS processes and administers unclassified issues through the CAP System.¹⁰⁶ The primary purpose of NEP exercises is to improve governmental capabilities pertaining to events requiring catastrophic incident management and crisis coordination. Therefore, it is important to document the results of all NEP events.¹⁰⁷ In order for this new system to be truly effective, it must go beyond just identifying actions requiring improvement. This process must actively assign these actions to organizations for resolution, analyze actions for trends, and then disseminate the results to organizations so that future deficiencies do not recur.

¹⁰⁵ At the time of this writing the National Response Framework was approved effective March 22, 2008, which is sixty days after its publication in the Federal Register.

¹⁰⁶ National Exercise Program Implementation Plan, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

2. Institutionalizing the CAP

The CAP System is quite new with DHS making it available to the "stakeholder community"¹⁰⁸ in November 2006."¹⁰⁹ Although available to stakeholders, the CAP system is not yet fully functional. As a result, it is still in its infancy toward fulfilling its intended purpose for correcting and improving governmental practices and improving preparedness. However, DHS' ability to institutionalize the program will likely prove difficult. The CAP System relies on a high level of cooperation and coordination to fix those problems identified, develop solutions to those problems, and then implement those solutions across multiple organizations. The CAP System, which requires a high degree of interaction and trust across government, will be extremely difficult to establish and institutionalize.

DHS Inspector General Richard Skinner highlights this challenge in a statement to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in March 2006, discussing the difficulties in establishing a fully functional corrective actions process:

The White House, Congress, DHS, FEMA, the Offices of Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office, the media, and others have invested much work in critiquing the federal response to Hurricane Katrina... But those "lessons learned" [from Hurricane Katrina] are really nothing more than "lessons recognized"

¹⁰⁸ According to the CAPS website, only validated members of the homeland security and emergency preparedness community are eligible to use the CAP System [<https://hseep.dhs.gov/caps/userRegistration.do>].

¹⁰⁹ National Exercise Program Briefing, (Washington D.C.: Department of Homeland Security), 11, <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dhs/nep.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2007).

until solutions are put in place. However, implementing changes to transform lessons into solutions occurs for only a fraction of lessons learned, which allows problems to recur as much as a decade after they were first recognized. Stronger mechanisms are needed to ensure that changes are implemented.¹¹⁰

3. Limitations of the CAP

Federal organizations have yet to see whether the CAP program is a stronger mechanism. Certain limitations within the CAP program may prevent it from achieving its intended purpose. One such limitation is the visibility of actions in the CAP System by CAP users. Currently, CAP users only have access and visibility to those items originating or assigned to their own section within their organization. There is no visibility of organizations working actions outside of their section. As a result, multiple organizations could be working on similar actions to identify and implement their own solutions with no knowledge that other organizations are wrestling the same type of problem. Visibility of corrective actions across organizations would allow multiple organizations working similar problems to collaborate and work towards a common solution. Visibility also allows organizations to view previous worked solutions, which they may use to correct actions they themselves experience.

E. THE U.K. LESSONS LEARNED PROCESS

Using the best practices of other nations can be an extremely useful means towards implementing DHS' Cap System. The UK also has a lessons learned process developed from exercises and operations. However, in

¹¹⁰ Skinner Statement, 19.

contrast to DHS, the UK's Home Office has established a comprehensive policy to manage their lessons learned.

1. Objectives

The objectives of their comprehensive framework are as follows:

- To ensure that lessons are identified and acted upon at the lowest appropriate level and escalated where necessary;
- To provide a clear link between lessons emerging and changes to plans and procedures;
- To provide a consistent framework for organizations to develop their own supporting arrangements for identifying and recording lessons learned;
- To work as far as possible within existing structures at local, regional and national level;
- To clarify responsibility for ensuring that lessons are identified and acted upon;
- To focus, at the national level, on those lessons raised that affect the multi-agency response or the functioning of key capabilities.¹¹¹

This policy framework establishes specific practices and procedures for identifying, tracking and resolving lessons learned within the various levels and departments of the UK Government. This framework also identifies protocols for identifying, recording and distributing lessons learned at the local and regional government

¹¹¹ Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Lessons Identified from UK Exercises and Operations – a Policy Framework, (London: United Kingdom Cabinet Office, 2006), 2, http://www.ukresilience.info/upload/assets/www.ukresilience.info/lessons_exercises2.pdf (accessed December 10, 2007).

levels, plus coordinating lessons learned activities at the national level.¹¹² DHS could easily adopt and modify this UK framework for use in identifying, assigning responsibility and resolving lessons learned at the local, state and national levels.

2. Effectiveness

There are strong indicators of the effectiveness of UK's lessons learned process. A U.K. Government report published in June 2006 identified 54 emergency procedures that should be improved based on lessons learned from the London Bombings in 2005. According to Epolitix.com, a website providing information on UK politics and parliamentary news, a follow-up report in August 2007 showed that of those 54 recommended improvements, 40 recommendations were accepted or implemented.¹¹³ Although this shows progress in resolving these problems, the report further noted that UK Government agencies must accomplish more in order to resolve the remaining 14 recommendations and that it will issue a follow-up report in November 2007. This clearly indicates that the U.K. framework not only identifies lessons learned, but also identifies and tracks corrective actions through resolution, in accordance with their established framework.

F. SUMMARY

A significant shortfall affecting the preparedness of our nation has been the lack of a corrective action program to identify issues, making assignments across organizations to resolve the issues, and tracking progress towards

¹¹² Lessons Identified from UK Exercises, P 3-4.

¹¹³ 'Lessons learnt' since London bombings', <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200708/6b0359fb-8c96-4b33-9c91-a8110d345e03.htm> (accessed February 29, 2008).

resolving and implementing those resolutions. DHS recently established its CAP System to fulfill those requirements. In order to effectively institutionalize DHS' CAP System, all government departments and agencies, as well as state and local governments, must work together to identify problems, develop and implement solutions, and disseminate those corrective actions to other organizations. As such, heads of departments and agencies, across the federal level and state and local officials must be involved in reviewing and implementing corrective actions affecting their particular organization.

Although the CAP Program is a step in the right direction, it does have limitations which will likely affect its usefulness. Allowing users to view all working actions and solutions will increase collaboration in deriving solutions. As well, it will benefit other organizations working solutions to similar problems. Another means of improving and institutionalizing the CAP Program is to analyze the UK's lessons learned process and incorporate those best practices into the DHS CAP System. This includes adopting a similar policy framework as the UK to identify, record, and distribute lessons learned at the local and regional government levels, plus coordinate lessons learned activities at the national level.

VI. CONCLUSION AND THE WAY AHEAD

A. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to identify problems occurring in the National Exercise Program and to propose solutions to correct those problems. As stated in Chapter I, the four areas are inter-related - actions occurring in one area can have an impact in any one of the other three areas. Although all four areas are important, based on the research conducted, I found funding to have the most significant impact. Funding appears almost to be a "silver bullet" when it comes to fixing problems in National-level Exercises. It appears to be almost as simple as fix funding and the program is fixed. However, it is not just that simple. There are other challenges within the NEP which funding will not fix - at least in the short term.

Of the four areas identified, interagency participation will be the hardest to achieve. This is due to organizational barriers and cultures which federal department and agencies must overcome before the NEP is embraced and institutionalized. Moreover, with all four areas being inter-related, lack of interagency participation will affect the CAP process, which relies on actions across multiple organizations, as well as stability and predictability.

Prior to the publishing of the NEP IMPLAN, there existed little specific guidance, policy, or procedures regarding planning, conducting, and executing NLEs. It almost seemed ludicrous for DHS to claim a National Exercise Program existed when there was no money, policies

or procedures to run the program. With the publishing of the NEP IMPLAN comes much of the framework necessary to adequately administer the NEP. However, it will still be a matter of time before the federal government fully implements all aspects of the NEP IMPLAN. Since an annual cycle creates the basis for many of the processes, such as schedules and budgeting, it will likely take a couple of iterations, and thus a couple of years, to get the processes where they need to be in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

For example, there still is no funding to support department and agency participation in NLEs. The organizations participating in NLE 2-08 are funding their participation from existing budgets or "out of hide." This has resulted in lower levels of participation for many of the departments and agencies.

B. THE WAY AHEAD

As previously stated, this document identifies and addresses four key areas which our government must correct in order to make the NEP a viable program for improving our Nation's preparedness. Chapters II through V, which address each key area, contain recommended actions necessary to improve the shortfalls in each of those areas. With DHS as the lead agency for administering the NEP, it will be incumbent on it to implement the changes identified. By following the framework and processes contained in the NEP IMPLAN, the NEP with its full-scale exercises should continue to grow and become more viable. However, DHS faces other challenges in its attempt to implement the changes.

As stated previously in this chapter, funding is a critical piece to fix in the NEP. Federal Organizations must submit budget requirements for their exercise participation. Then DHS must validate that the budget requested supports the participation required of that organization. These budget amounts must be included in the President's budget and eventually funded by Congress. Fixing funding will go a long way in fixing interagency participation.

The CAP Program must have the support and attention of national leaders in order for it to be effective. Implementing an effective CAP Program will be a significant step forward in interagency participation since it will require multiple organizations collaborating on ways to fix policies and procedures at the Federal level. However, this will not happen if National leaders do not require these changes to occur.

By fixing exercise funding and implementing the CAP system, interagency participation should naturally increase. This will also contribute to improving stability and predictability within the NEP. However, it will not happen overnight. It will likely take years to get the NEP to become an accepted and viable means for improving our Nation's preparedness in responding to a terrorist event or a natural disaster. A better and tougher exercise program makes us all better and tougher when the real event comes along.

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